

ILLINOIS

FAMILIES Now and Forever

Families by Foster Care, Adoption and Guardianship®

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services®



Foster Parent Appreciation Month

MAY 2004



Bryan Samuels

From the DCFS Director

Dear Foster
Parents:

May is designated Foster Parent Appreciation Month in Illinois – a time when the spotlight shines on foster parents. Many of you will participate in activities observing Foster Parent Appreciation Month. Some of you may even be recognized for your role as a foster parent. But I want to extend a sincere thank you to all foster parents, not just the ones who have received awards.

Being a parent is challenging. Add to it a child who is biologically not yours, has been abused or

neglected, and may have some bonding or social issues and the challenge may be overwhelming. But you chose to take on responsibilities not everyone can handle: numerous doctor's visits, school visits, attending counseling sessions, organizing sibling visits, continuous foster parent training, caring for children with disabilities, and sometimes dealing with destructive behavior. In addition to these responsibilities, many of you also work full-time jobs and care for your biological children. And for that show of love, you deserve to be recognized always, not just in the month of May.

Thanks to you, children in foster care have learned to love and trust again. You have encouraged these children to move forward and you have supported their dreams. You have opened up a world of possibilities for them and maybe even one day they will open their hearts and homes to a child. And for that, I am truly grateful for your commitment.

There is no greater way to make a difference in the life of a child than to be a loving, supportive foster parent. Thank you for choosing to help DCFS raise our children.

FOSTER OUR FUTURE

2004 DCFS Caregivers Conference sets record attendance

The 2004 Spring Caregivers Conference on March 26-28 was the largest conference of its kind that DCFS has ever sponsored. More than 560 foster, adoptive and guardianship parents devoted three days to education, inspiration and even a little relaxation. A well-rounded slate of presenters guided a selection of 50 workshops on a myriad of parenting and development topics.



Merri Dee, from WGN Television, greeted foster and adoptive parents after sharing her personal reasons for advocating for children.



Uhlich Voices performed a rousing rap song, letting the audience hear what life in the child welfare system is like from a youth's perspective.

At the Open Forum on Friday, Director Samuels fielded questions from the audience about services and the department's upcoming plans to serve the changing population of children in care. His opening address resulted in a standing ovation after he shared his view on child welfare. His personal experiences growing up in a group home especially resonated with the audience. Many of the executive staff were on hand Friday for the Regional break-out sessions and the opening reception that evening.

Saturday started with an "early bird" workshop at 7 a.m. and continued with classes and an inspirational keynote address by WGN Television executive and child advocate Merri Dee. The annual Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parent Association's (IFAPA) scholarship auction raised more than \$6,500, even after being interrupted by an impromptu protest of proposed changes to the adoption subsidy policy. The matter was addressed, and DCFS extended the review period to take additional comments from concerned parties.

Sunday got off to a rousing start with a performance of rap music with lyrics written by youth from Uhlich Children's Advantage Network (U-CAN). The morning's keynote speaker Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu kept the energy



Director Samuels, Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council and the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council fielded questions during the Open Forum.

flowing with words to motivate caregivers to take care of themselves physically and emotionally in order to care for children. He also offered a unique perspective on guiding African-American and Hispanic youth to reach their potential as men.



Many attendees brought items to donate for the annual IFAPA scholarship auction.

The conference ended with many positive comments from the evaluations and ideas for next year. Planning for 2005 will be underway soon. Any caregivers who wish to offer input can call the Office of Foster Parent Support at 217-524-2422.



ACR goes better with foster parents

The Administrative Case Review (ACR) is a federally mandated process to ensure a periodic third-party look at every child in custody or guardianship of the Department. The Office of Administrative Case Review coordinates the reviews by scheduling an ACR every six months for children in out of home care. Foster parents play a key part in the review and are encouraged to participate.

The purpose of the ACR is to determine if the Client Service Plan is addressing the needs of the family and the child and is moving the case towards the permanency goal, while meeting agency policy, federal and state laws and decrees. Since the Client Service Plan is the foundation, the ACR requires the clients' participation. This means the birth parent/s are invited, unless there has been a Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) or the parent/s whereabouts are unknown. While the participants are often the same, the ACR process is not a staffing or family meeting. The focus is a review of the service plan, its progress and how it adheres to appropriate policy.

To ensure the foster parents have an opportunity to give their perspective on the children in their care, it is important that the child's worker includes them on the Case Review Monthly Roster (CRMR). The letters of invitation are sent through an automated system. Therefore, it is important that the worker has the correct home address and not the

agency's address on the CRMR. Foster parents should also give dates and times that are most suitable for them to attend the review. When that information is entered, the automated system will send a letter to all parties at least 21 days prior to the scheduled review date. Letters should be received with at least two weeks notice. As an extra measure, when a child comes to a home, foster parents can ask the worker what the review cycle is for the child (e.g. January and July) in case notice is delayed. Most reviews are slotted in 90-minute intervals, so punctuality is important.

If siblings are involved, the reviewer has the right to segment the review, to discuss each child individually. A reviewer may ask a foster parent to wait and not participate in portions of the review that do not pertain to the child/children in the home. This is for confidentiality reasons and to best meet the needs of each child being reviewed.

Periodically, Consumer Surveys are handed out at the end of the review to all participants. There is one specifically for foster parents. The time frames for the Consumer Surveys are randomly selected. However, participants may ask the reviewer for a survey at any time if they wish. Most review locations have a box for completed surveys. This feedback is important and ACR looks forward to hearing from foster parents who participate in the ACR process.

Don't forget school physicals

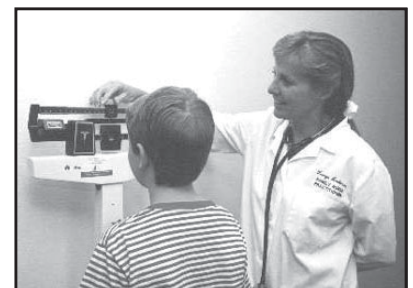
The state of Illinois requires school children to have a current physical (within the past year) and to be current with immunizations if they are:

- Entering school for the first time at any age
- Are or will be five years old when entering kindergarten
- Entering the fifth grade
- Entering the ninth grade

Remember that as of July 2002, there is a requirement for children entering kindergarten or first grade to be immunized against chickenpox/varicella.

Original copies of the Certificate of Child Health Examination, completed and signed by the physician should be given to the school nurse where the child is enrolled. Don't forget to give a copy to the child's caseworker and to keep a copy for your own records.

Children who do not have a current physical or shots by October 15, according to State law will not be allowed to attend school until the record is updated. Questions about exams or immunizations can be directed to the Office of Health Policy at 217-557-2689.



Supervision is the key to preventing accidental drowning deaths

Get water wise... SUPERVISE!

One Illinois infant drowned in less than six inches of water when his parent walked away to answer the phone. Another toddler drowned when she fell headfirst into a five-gallon bucket partially filled with water.

In 2003, there were 15 accidental drowning deaths in Illinois. Education and adult supervision could have prevented these deaths.

Children cannot be left unattended around water even for one moment without the possibility of something tragic happening. "Get Water Wise...Supervise" is the name of a statewide campaign being promoted by a coalition of public and private agencies including the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, Prevent Child Abuse Illinois, The American Red Cross, and the Illinois Department of Public Health.

Drowning can occur in seconds in small amounts of water in pools, bathtubs and buckets. Parents need to lock access to pools, empty buckets and baby pools when they are not in use and make sure there are enough adults to adequately supervise the number of children around water. It is important to teach children to stay away from water

until an adult is present and to teach children to swim.

Please use the following safety tips to help protect children from water-related tragedy in the summer months and all year long.

Swimming pools:

- Keep ladders, patio furniture and toys away from above-ground pools. Toddlers are better climbers than you might think!
- Fence in pool and lock the gate. Pool covers and alarms provide added protection.
- Young children should wear or use personal flotation devices, but remember that these devices do not replace adult supervision. They could deflate or slip from underneath a child, leaving him in a dangerous situation.
- Remind babysitters and other caretakers not to leave children unattended near or in water.
- Appoint an adult who can swim to watch kids during pool parties.
- Learn CPR and keep rescue equipment, a telephone and emergency numbers near all pools. Seconds count when it comes to preventing death or serious injury.

Baby pools:

- Don't be lulled into a false sense of security because of the shallowness of baby pools.

Did you know that a small child could drown in as little as two inches of water? Children should always be supervised when they are in a baby pool.

- Empty the pool immediately after use and store it upside-down.

Bathtubs:

- Never leave a young child alone in a bathtub.
- Don't rely on a bathtub seat for safety.
- Don't allow children to play alone in bathrooms.

Buckets:

- Remember that five-gallon buckets of water pose a threat to babies and toddlers who may topple into them while playing and be unable to free themselves.
- Empty and store all buckets out of children's reach.

2002 - 2003 Accidental Child Drowning Deaths in Illinois

In 2002, there were 18 accidental drowning deaths:

- 6 in swimming pools
- 6 in a river, lake or pond
- 4 in a bathtub
- 1 in a quarry
- 1 in a sump pump

In 2003, there were 15 accidental drowning deaths:

- 7 in swimming pools
- 5 in a river, lake or pond
- 1 in a bathtub
- 1 in a bucket
- 1 in a quarry

DCFS INVITES YOU TO THE ILLINOIS STATE FAIR

August 13 – August 22, 2004

Corner of Peoria Road and Sangamon Ave., Springfield

*Foster Families, Relative Caregiver Families, Adoptive Families,
& Guardianship Families - Choose Your Own Discount Day!*

This is Your ONLY Invitation to the State Fair. Please Act NOW if You Wish to Attend.

Please complete the coupon below if you would like to attend the Illinois State Fair and get the discounts available for foster, adoptive, and guardianship families. **Please mail or fax the coupon to DCFS TODAY, and no later than June 30, 2004.** *Nothing will be sent to you unless you return this coupon. Reminders will NOT be sent.*

If you return the coupon now, in July you will be sent:

- A ticket that will get your vehicle and everyone in it into the Fair and parked for one fee of \$3.
- 1 food ticket for each family member, worth \$3 in food or drink.
- One ride ticket for each family member that provides unlimited rides for \$8 during certain times **ONLY on Monday, August 16 – Friday, August 20.**
- A special map of the fairgrounds made just for you.

Please Complete the Form Below & Mail or Fax to DCFS Today

COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS COUPON NO LATER THAN JUNE 30, 2004

Office of Communications, Department of Children and Family Services
406 East Monroe Street, Station 65
Springfield, IL 62701-1498
Fax: 217-524-0014

Tickets may NOT be requested by telephone.

We are a licensed foster family, relative caregiver, a guardianship family or have adopted a child through DCFS, and we would like to attend the 2004 Illinois State Fair. We understand that only our foster, adopted and guardianship children and family members who live in our home consistent with DCFS licensing regulations are eligible for these special offers.

There will be _____ family members in our party. Number of vehicles _____ (*limit 2*)

If requesting more than 8 tickets, please print the name and phone number of your licensing or subsidy worker.

Worker's name _____ Phone number _____

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Mailing Address: _____ Apt. No. _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

For foster families only:

We are supervised by DCFS _____

We are supervised by a private agency _____ Agency Name _____

Note - Please bring a copy of this invitation or a copy of a recent board or subsidy invoice with you when you attend the Fair. You may be asked to show this invitation or invoice in order to use the tickets. **It is illegal to sell these tickets or transfer them to any person who is not a family member living in your home.**

Tell it Like it Is

Families, Now and Forever wants to hear the “real deal” on caring for children from those who know best — you!

Here is what you had to say to the question: **What has an adult (e.g. caseworker, agency, neighbor, family member) done that made it clear they appreciated your contribution as caregiver?**

Each of our neighbors has commented about how much they admire and respect what my wife and I are doing for John. We live in a very close neighborhood. They all accept John as just another 12-year-old boy who lives in our neighborhood.

Also, our Sunday school class prayed with Lynn and I as we prepared to start foster parenting and donated things to help set up his room. Now as we struggle at times they pray with and for us. They call and check on us and they offer their help so we don't burn out.

God placed many special people around us to make this home extra happy for John. I can't imagine life without John.

Dan Stumpf

The new question is: **What was the most surprising aspect of foster care or adoption that training couldn't really prepare you for?**

You can contact me with your response by phone at 312-814-6824 or e-mail at vjames@idcfs.state.il.us. I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Vanessa James, Editor

Here's to the Times

By Jennifer Wilson, age 18

Here's to the sleepless nights when one
of us was ill,
And with a tender heart you prayed for us to heal.
Here's to the years of school that you saw us
through,
And punished us for bad grades even though
it hurt you.

And here's to all the boo boo's and owies that
you kissed away,
And because no matter how mad you got,
you still let us stay.
Here's to the times we cuddled up or laid
our heads in your lap,
steering us away from any painful mishaps.

Here's to the words of wisdom you've
given through the years,
and chasing away all of our fears.
Here's to the love that you unconditionally gave,
And giving us shelter from the storms to
keep us safe.

Here's to all the times that we did not
have a friend,
But we always knew you were there to lend
a loving hand.
Here's to the times that we argued and fought,
And with loving wisdom, an answer you sought.

Here's to the times we hid the true facts,
But there you were on our tracks.
Here's to the times you always know,
when one of us is feeling low.

With loving guidance you've held our hand,
But managed to let us take our own stands.
With all our hearts we'd like to say,
You're special, we love you, and
Happy Mother's Day!

*Jennifer Wilson is one of seven children adopted
by Charlotte Wilson of Danville.*



Illinois Families Now and Forever

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A family for me

Shiquin [6044] Shiquin, 12, has a relaxed, easygoing style that people instinctively like. While his laid-back nature means he is often on the quiet side, Shiquin can also open up, ask questions, and express his needs. He has several friends and is very close with his older sister. His favorite activities include playing football, basketball, and board games.

Shiquin's foster mom said he is good at following instructions and will accept redirection when necessary. She added that he's not a fussy eater – he likes greens and everything else she cooks. Shiquin's worker praised his calm disposition and "great personality." Shiquin will benefit from lots of love and attention. You can support him as he continues to express his feelings and follow his interests. You can also help him complete his homework on time. Shiquin said he would like to have a mom and a dad who care about him.

Perry [5562] Perry, 9, has a great imagination and loves to use it when he's drawing. You'll probably find colorful portraits of lions, giraffes, and elephants in his sketchbook. When he's not working on his latest illustration, Perry might be relaxing at the swimming pool or beach with his foster family. When he goes on outings, Perry is doing better at considering his own safety before engaging in activities that might be risky.

His worker said Perry is an enjoyable child with a nice smile. His foster parent and teacher said he is often lovable and endearing. Potential families could provide Perry with a predictable, structured home life and lots of love and attention. You can be willing to make a long-term commitment to his care.

Oidina [6191] This young lady is artistic and a talented performer! Oidina, 14, sings well and is an excellent dancer. She also loves to draw. Her favorite sports are hockey and track and field. She's very fond of pets. Oidina expresses affection easily after she has known someone for a while.

Her foster parent said she is kind and caring and trustworthy enough to take on leadership roles. Her teacher said that she is quite motivated to move to be successful at school and therefore tries very hard. Prospective parents for Oidina could be loving and supportive and help Oidina on her journey through adolescence.

Kati [7038] Kati, 12, is a social butterfly! She loves her church youth group, where she gets to mix with other children. She also likes the camaraderie she finds at summer and winter camps. Although she tries, Kati may not always follow the rules presented by adults. But she likes to help adults whenever they need a hand. She also likes to help animals, and enjoys caring for the cat in her foster home. At times, her temper may get the best of her, but she is receiving support in this area and is making tremendous progress.

Kati's foster parent said she can be sweet and perceptive. Her worker reports that Kati enjoys ice skating and doing arts and crafts projects. The family for Kati would love and support her, and praise her when she does well. You can set clear guidelines and help her to follow them. Kati said she would like "a family that would care for me, love me like their own daughter, and love me forever."

If you are interested in adopting one of these children or learning about other children waiting to be adopted, please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390, or see the AICI web site – www.adoptinfo-il.org.

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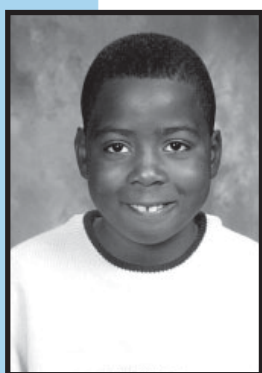
DO YOU KNOW A FAMILY FOR ME?



Illinois State Fair
ticket information
inside on page 5

Inside this issue:

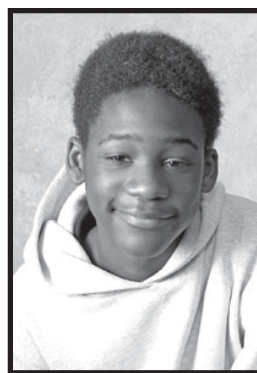
- Page 1 - Message of thanks from Director Samuels
- Page 2 - Highlights from DCFS Caregivers Conference
- Page 3 - Foster parent role in Administrative Case Review (ACR)
- Page 4 - Tips on water safety
- Page 5 - Invitation to Illinois State Fair
- Page 6 - Tell It Like It Is reader feedback
- Page 7 - Family for Me profiles



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